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Thesis

# THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF ISAIAH

by

Warren Gould Odom

(A.B., Baker University, 1931)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

1933

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Summary

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# THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE OF ISAIAH

## Introduction

We have been deeply conscious of the contributions made by ancient Rome and Greece to our civilization, and we must not forget that of ancient Israel. To Rome we owe our political law; to Greece we owe our cultural foundations; and to Israel we owe our religion. Of this religion "prophecy is its most splendid flower."[1]

"Hebrew prophecy is the most remarkable and profound movement the human spirit has ever known; history can show no parallel to it. Though limited to a comparatively brief period and confined to an insignificant corner of the world, it has proved to be one of the most influential factors moulding the character and destiny of mankind."[2]

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The Place of the Prophet in the Life of Israel. The Old Testament prophet occupied a unique place among his fellow men. They were considered as the direct representatives, or ambassadors, of Yahweh. The priest was the administrator of the Law (Torah); the sage was the wise man who made the practical applications; but to the prophet was left the responsibility of revealing the will of God. He had the sense of being within the councils of God. He was not a pedagogue, not a critic, not a scholar, but a spiritual pioneer.[1] The leading prophets were men who towered above their contemporaries in every way. They were supreme in character, in intellect, in sincerity of purpose, and in the intimacy of their contact with the divine. "They were bold and consecrated preachers of right living, sane and courageous social reformers, as well as shrewd and fearless politicians and statesmen."[2]

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They are noted for the part they played in politics. They condemned the prevailing social institutions. In fact they invaded every sphere of life, all because of their deep realization of what Yahweh might mean to Israel. Back of their every undertaking was this tremendous drive of a

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vital religious experience. No where is this truth demonstrated more forcibly than in the life of the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz.

Brief Statement Concerning the Prophet Isaiah. One of the greatest of these great men was Isaiah, son of Amoz. "The fact that Judah did not share the fate of Israel, but was able to maintain its independent existence for more than a century longer, is very largely due to the work and influence of this man. He is one of the best examples of genuine manhood known to Biblical history, and filled all the functions of the prophet's office with high distinction. He was well born, mingling with ease in both the highest and the lowest circles of Jerusalem society. So filled was he with the consciousness of his mission that he declared both himself and his children as divinely appointed agents for the instruction of Israel (8:18). He was both a commanding speaker and a writer of note. He was, like Amos and Hosea, a social and religious reformer, fearlessly attacking the social and religious evils of his

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time. He was a great statesman, being, during a large share of his life, one of the king's chief advisers. During two political crises, the Syro-Ephraimitic war and Sennacherib's invasion, he was the commanding figure, calm and serene, and with a safe consistent policy. As a theologian, he both reiterated the heart of those who had gone before him, and added new elements to the religion of his people."[1] They are as follows:

(1) The conception of the holiness and majesty of Israel (6:3, 3:8, 2:10, 37:23).

(2) Faith as the means of tranquility in crucial times (7:9, 28:16).

(3) The inviolability of Jerusalem (8:18b, 18:7b, 28:16ff, 3:15).

(4) The idea of "the remnant" (7:3 cf 10:20-23), by which the prophet gives form to the hope of the establishment of the divine kingdom (2:2-4, 4:22ff, 9:6ff, 11:1-9, 18:7, 19:21-23).

In this study it is our purpose to discuss the place of Isaiah in the life of Judah, endeavoring to show how he was guided and motivated

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# I.

## The Book of Isaiah

An intensive struggle has been waging for many years over the authorship and authenticity of the book of Isaiah. It has been one of the knottiest problems in all the field of Biblical criticism. However, at the same time, it has been recognized that there are few other books of the Old Testament which have equalled its sphere of influence. It is impossible, in this study, for us to consider the problem in detail, but we shall try to touch on its high points.

Name, and Place in the Canon. Our word "Isaiah" is a transliteration of the Hebrew, "Yeshayah," which is the name used for the book in the Hebrew Bible. It means "Yahweh saves," or "Yahweh is salvation." This is practically the same meaning as is found in Joshua and Hoshea.[1]

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As long as these prophetic books were written on separate rolls and existed as independent documents this question of the proper order did not exist. But before long they began to copy more than one book on the same roll and then the problem of priority had to be considered. The Babylonian Talmud is one of the first attempts along this line. Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings were placed in that order because of their contents. Since Jeremiah was similar to Kings in language and style it was placed next. Ezekiel had to follow Jeremiah, which left the other places to Isaiah, and "the Twelve." Later, a distinction was made between the historical and

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Proto-Isaiah. Most modern scholars agree that the book of Isaiah is the work of several men, and may be divided into at least three distinct parts: chapters one through thirty-nine, forty through fifty-five, and fifty-six through sixty-six. From the three separate superscriptions found at the beginning of chapters one, two, and thirteen, and from the use of the third person when referring to Isaiah in chapters thirty-six through thirty-nine, we may safely infer that the book is not entirely the work of Isaiah himself. It has probably developed from the collection and combination of the separate sayings, writings, discourses, and prophecies of the prophet. Thus, it is perfectly possible that in a collection of this kind some extraneous material would be included. This is evidently what happened here.[2]

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There has been much controversy over just what portions of the book belong to the first Isaiah. There are, however, certain portions which most scholars have admitted to be genuine. These are:[1] 1 - 12, 14:24 - 20:6, 22, 23:1-14(?), 28 - 33.

Several critics have denied the genuineness of the above mentioned passages. Most of their attack has been concentrated on four or five of these:

(1) The promises of salvation in 2:2-4, 4:2-6, 9:2-7, and 11:1-10. Stade, Hackmann, Marti, and others maintain that these contradict other ideas of Isaiah; that they are not logically connected; and that they have no meaning for his time. But these are negligible if we hold to the idea that Isaiah, like the other prophets, did not originate the expectation of salvation, but assumes it to be already familiar to his hearers.[2]

(2) The utterance concerning Moab in chapters fifteen and sixteen. This, for the most part, sounds much unlike our Isaiah. Only the brief

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1. Smith, Introduction to the Old Testament, p. 180.
2. Ibid., p. 182.

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(3) The utterance about Egypt in chapter nineteen. This very naturally divides itself into two parts: one through seventeen, and eighteen through twenty-five. Cheyne divides it into four parts,[2] but it is much easier to consider it with the first division, especially if verses sixteen and seventeen are considered as a connecting link. The objections to the first division are of little consequence and do not need to be considered here, but those to eighteen through twenty-five are much more serious. It would seem to be based on

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(4) The utterance about Tyre, chapter twenty-three. Verses one through fourteen have their basis in an

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(5) The survey of the Last Times in chapters twenty-three and thirty-three. The genuineness of this passage has been questioned by Duhm, Marti, and others on general grounds such as that it is insipid, didactic, verbose, and vague, but it has not been disproved on historical grounds. The first verse of chapter thirty-two takes us back to a time when kings still ruled in Jerusalem, and the address to the careless women in verse nine following implies a pre-Exilic origin. We also find eschatology in chapter thirty-three, but the possibility of its discussion by Isaiah can be denied only by

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In chapters twenty-four through twenty-seven we seem to have a passage which definitely did not come from the hand of the first Isaiah. In the first twenty-three chapters we have dealt with the particular circumstances or fates of definite nations, both Jewish and foreign. But here we pass into writings concerning the future of the entire world. "We pass from prophecy to apocalypse."[3]

In them we find Yahweh making ready to judge the peoples of the earth for the purpose of final punishment. He will rule all as the universal king and Jerusalem will be his capital city and on his accession will give a great feast

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The definite references are rather vague and elusive but certain general conditions of the time are clear and distiguishable. The Jews are weak and helpless waiting for a marvellous intervention from Yahweh; they are politically dependent with no king of their own; they are scattered over the face of the earth (27:13); and are an object of reproach everywhere (25:8).[1] This points very definitely to a post-Exilic authorship. Certain ideas such as that of individual resurrection and of the abolition of death could not have existed until after the Exile. This is also true of the apocalyptic style employed here.[2] "Thus the general political and social conditions, as well as the language and style, compel us to refer the prophecy to the post-exilic period; the ideas should warn us that

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any theory which refers the prophecy to an early part of that period is hazardous."[1]

Another portion of the first thirty-nine chapters commonly attributed to other than Isaianic sources is chapters thirty-four and thirty-five. Here we have the future of Edom contrasted with that of Edom. Edom will fall heir to a cruel judgment leaving a land desolate and forsaken. On the other hand stricken Israel will be restored to a place of glory and power and all the peoples returned to their native land. These two chapters are not necessarily united but their similarity of thought and content makes it highly probable that they come from the same period if not from the same author.[2]

Doctor Eiselen proposed the following reasons for a date not earlier than the Exile:[3]

(1) Their apocalyptic tendencies point to a late date; all the nations and even the hosts of heaven will be involved in the judgment.

(2) The passionate hatred of the Edomites reached its height at the time of the fall of Jerusalem.

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1. Gray, Isaiah (ICC), p. 404.
2. Eiselen, Prophetic Books of the O.T., I, p. 180.
3. Ibid., p. 181.

any theory which refers the prophecy to an early part of that period is inaccurate."[1]

Another section of the first thirty-nine chapters commonly attributed to other than Isaiahic sources is chapters thirty-four and thirty-five. Here we have the future of Edom contrasted with that of Zion. Edom will fall prey to a carnal judgment leaving a land desolate and forsaken. On the other hand strangers Israel will be restored to a place of glory and honor and all the peoples returned to their native land. These two chapters are not necessarily united but their similarity of thought and content makes it highly probable that they come from the same period if not from the same author.[2]

Doctor Kissane proposes the following reasons for a date not earlier than the Exile:[3]

(1) That apocalyptic tendencies point to a late date; all the nations and even the hosts of heaven will be involved in the judgment.

(2) The resemblance between of the Idumites reminds the hatred at the time of the fall of Jerusalem.

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1. Orr, Isaiah (ICC), p. 404.
2. Kissane, Prophetic Books of the O.T., I, p. 150.
3. Ibid., p. 344.

(3) Its language and style reveal close resemblances with exilic and post-exilic literature.

(4) The literary parallels with late writings are more numerous than with the pre-exilic works; and it seems probable, in this case, that chapters thirty-four and thirty-five have been the borrowers.

Chapters thirty-six through thirty-nine form a sort of historical appendix, relating incidents occurring during the reign of Hezekiah, and in which Isaiah played a prominent part. The four chapters, with the exception of a few passages, are nearly identical with Second Kings chapter eighteen, verse thirteen, through chapter twenty, verse nineteen. That these narratives are not the work of our Isaiah, is now generally admitted by students of the history of the Old Testament.[1]

Deutero-Isaiah. Thus we have seen that the authentic sections dealing with the life of Isaiah, son of Amoz, which come from the pen of Isaiah are

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found within the first thirty-nine chapters. However, there are sixty-six chapters in the book and somebody must have been responsible for their contents. This problem has attracted the attention of many outstanding scholars and they have been able to reach some measure of agreement. The remainder has been divided into two parts - chapters forty through fifty-five, and fifty-six through sixty-six. It is now almost universally accepted that this first section of the remainder is the work of a single unnamed author, who, for convenient usage, is generally called Deutero-Isaiah.

There are many valid reasons for this conclusion. Some of them are technical, some are subtle, and some are historical in character. A complete account of them would require an intimate knowledge of the Hebrew language, long years of study, and a thorough mastery of ancient history. Thus, for obvious reasons, we can do nothing more in this study than to relate briefly the findings of others.

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of style and language.[1] There is a danger that too much emphasis will be placed on these bits of evidence, but the careful reader cannot help noticing a difference between these and the earlier chapters of the book. Certain phrases and words appear here which are rarely found in the first part. For example, a new emphasis is placed on the word for righteousness. Now it carries more of the idea of justice, or redemptive righteousness.[2] A peculiar word is used to express the negative eight times in the second and not at all in chapters one through thirty-nine.[3] If we read carefully enough we cannot help noticing the differences in tone and method. The powerful energy of the earlier stands in sharp contrast to the solemn beauty of the latter.

Another proof of these conclusions has been found in the differing religious and theological ideas.[4] Much greater confidence may be placed in these findings. Here we see two entirely

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2. Driver, Literature of the O.T., p. 239.
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different ways of describing God in his relations with man. In the first section the chief figure is the Messianic King, but in the second he is superseded by the Suffering Servant. The "Remnant" plays an important role in the first and is hardly mentioned in the latter. The second is far superior in its portrayal of the incomparable God as an omnipotent ruler and universal creator. These are only a few of the examples which might be given concerning the differing religious and theological ideas.

The strongest argument of them all is the one which concerns the historical background.[1] There is no doubt that these latter chapters deal with the times of the Babylonian captivity which took place from 585 to 537 B.C. The writer is evidently in constant association with the exiles, seeking to revive their hopes and to renew their faith. In chapter forty-one we find the first statement with regard to the historical situation, and from here on we have a vivid picture concerning it. Cyrus is portrayed as a world conqueror and there is an entire series of oracles

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dealing with his work. At one time it was maintained that this was the first Isaiah predicting the events of the future, but this has no foundation. The prophets did prophesy future events but never anything so vastly removed from their own time as this. Understood in its proper setting as a work of a later hand, and exerting a powerful influence on the people of its own age, these chapters contain much of value and significance for us of today.

Their heart is expressed in the first utterance of the prophet: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God" (40:1). This message pervades the section from beginning to end. Enforcing this vital note is his absolute conviction that Yahweh is the one supreme Deity. Such an emphasis was far from new, but there was a crying need for its forceful revival. Israel, with Yahweh as its God, had been carried into exile, while the Babylonians with their crude idolatry had become the chief nation of the ancient world. Thus, the Israelites reasoned that their God must be inferior and unworthy of further allegiance. But Deutero-Isaiah, well seeing the vanity of this reasoning,

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cried out time after time against the foolishness of idol worship and insisted upon the sole deity of the great Yahweh.[1]

Hand in hand with this idea went that of his supreme power; an all knowing, all powerful God. Then, too, he was possessed of such righteousness as no other person or deity could possibly attain.[2]

In the first section of the book we found great stress laid on "the Holy One of Israel" as a description of the relation between Yahweh and his chosen people. This emphasis is given just as prominent a place by the second Isaiah. The holiness of Yahweh forms the motive for his righteousness. Because he is holy, and because he is truly perfect, he must be true to his covenant relationship with Israel. Whatever the people might do, he is bound to do his best to make Israel his own nation, and through them bring news of himself to the entire world.[3]

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Trito-Isaiah. No observing reader can help noticing the great change in color, tone, and circumstance which occurs as soon as he enters chapter

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2. Eiselen, Prophetic Books of the O.T., p. 255.

fifty-six. These verses make the break more sudden and more noticeable than almost any others in the entire third section. In fact some of these passages, such as chapters sixty through sixty-two, are worthy of being classed with those of Deutero-Isaiah.

It was formerly the custom to consider our last two sections as one, belonging to what was called the second Isaiah. Duhm was chiefly responsible for the distinction which most scholars accept today. He attributed these chapters to one whom he called Trito-Isaiah, who wrote shortly before Ezra and Nehemiah , who was perhaps a contemporary of Malachi, and who laid great stress on the threatened schism of the Samaritans (57:3-13, 66:1-4, 66:15-17).[1]

This view is now widely accepted, except for the fact that many question the unity of these chapters on the basis that the personality of the writer would necessarily have to be of too changeable a nature, so they suggest a Deutero-Isaian, or a Trito-Isaian school.[2]

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1. Eiselen, Prophetic Books of the O.T., p. 235.
2. Ibid., p. 237.

But there is something to be said for the other side.[1] In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah the chief interest was in the law and mixed marriages. These are not even mentioned here. Then there is a severe indictment against the worship of false gods on the part of the third Isaiah, and Malachi completely ignores the same question. The passages point very definitely to a time when the Temple was not even in existence (63:18, 64:8, 66:1-5). This leads to two possibilities.[2] First, the section is a unified whole, written about 537 - 520 B.C., a time when the Temple had not yet been built, and when the controversy with the Samaritans was at its peak. Second, that the writing is not the work of one man. This would needs suggest a man of the post-Exilic period who combined some of the Deutero-Isaian eschatology (chs 60 - 62), with the work of another, dating from 586 to 520 B.C. (56:9 - 57, 13, 63:7 - 66), and enlarged with some of his own additions (56:1-8, 57:14 - 59, 63:1-6, 66:6-24).

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Dr. Eiselen summarizes the conclusions concerning the authorship of this third section as follows:[1]

(1) Chapters fifty-five through sixty-six are not the work of Deutero-Isaiah.

(2) The author of these chapters was influenced by Deutero-Isaiah, and in some places by Deuteronomy and Ezekiel.

(3) The days of Malachi and Ezra-Nehemiah furnish a satisfactory date for their writings. A possible exception to this is found in chapter sixty-three, verse seven, through chapter sixty-four, verse twelve.

A greater number, however, maintain that it is probably the work of several men, most of whom lived in the middle fifth century. Among others Cheyne, Budde, Gray, Kittel are exponents of this view.

No prophet, preacher, or national leader ever faced greater difficulties or more serious problems than did this Trito-Isaiah, whether he be one or many. First of all, his people were in

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the midst of a depression, probably much like the one through which we are now passing. Its cause was the hostile behavior of the unfriendly tribes. They closed all avenues for trade and even made devastating raids on their fields.[1]

Then, too, those who had remained in Jerusalem during the term of the Exile had forgotten much of their teaching concerning Yahweh and had had resorted to the worship of pagan gods. Nor were the morals of those who returned much better. The officials were extremely negligent in their duties; the rich stopped at nothing in their oppression of the poor; there seemed to be no such thing as the proper administration of justice; and the people themselves had fallen into mere formalism in their religious observances.[2]

Trito-Isaiah met these problems which confronted him in his ministry with the enunciation of two distinct principles.[3] First, he emphasized the glories of the kingdom of God, using vivid colors and brilliant pictures in abundance to de-

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Secondly, he emphasized the importance of externals in religion. Form and ritual must have an important part in all their religious observances. The other side is not overlooked, however. Only those who live in close communion with Yahweh will be admitted to the new age. His description of the ideal fast (56:6-7) bears a close resemblance to the high ethics of the eighth century prophets.

Thus, we find our book of Isaiah written by at least three men, and probably many more had a hand in it. Each has emphasized vital principles for true Christian living, and each has given us much which is worthwhile, even for this age.

Date of Compilation. The book is undoubtedly a post-Exilic compilation. It probably did not reach its final form before the third century at the earliest.[1] Also it must have existed in its

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There are several points of external information which prove to us the truth of the above statements, but there is not time to discuss them here. However, we do want to make brief mention of the evidence found in the book of Isaiah itself. As we look into it with this purpose in mind two significant features are especially outstanding:[3] the arrangement of the content matter, and the presence of several titles. We can see, upon close examination, certain principles of arrangement, but none of them have been consistently carried out. Subject matter probably exercised some influence. In chapters thirteen through twenty-three we find the prophecies con-

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Another principle which can be discerned is that of chronology. Chapter six, verse one, "the year that king Uzziah died" (740 B.C.) is followed in chapter seven by definite mention of the next king, Ahaz. In chapter fourteen the death of Ahaz is mentioned. This is listed as 715 B.C. Chapter twenty, verse one, refers to the year 711 B.C. and the Assyrian Sargon. After this there follows in the correct order mention of Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Cyrus, and others. Yet further study will show this principle also to have been violated with alarming frequency.[2]

The presence of different titles in the book seems to be clear evidence that the editor, whoever he may have been, incorporated into his work several previously existing books without any attempt to rearrange their contents. Thus in

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From this we must come to the conclusion that the book of Isaiah as we have it today consists of a compilation of the work of a number of authors, compiled by one editor, or group of editors, at some later date. Dr. Eiselen has outlined the successive stages in this process as follows:[2]

(1) From 740 to 700 B.C. Isaiah, the son of Amoz, was active in the kingdom of Judah. In order to

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(2) Some of the collections were entrusted to his followers (8:16). These were probably enlarged by the addition of various sayings which had not been written, but treasured in the minds of those who followed him.

(3) As the years passed Isaiah became more and more of a national hero, and accordingly the stories about his activities increased.

(4) Toward the close of the Babylonian exile another prophet brought a message of comfort and consolation, promising speedy deliverance, and portraying in vivid pictures Israel's sublime commission to the world (chs 40-55). At the same time the prophecies concerning the foreign nations were produced (13:1 - 14:23, 21:1-10).

(5) An intense literary activity, which took place following the Exile, led to a renewed in-

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(4) Toward the close of the Babylonian exile another prophet brought a message of comfort and consolation, promising speedy deliverance, and portraying in vivid pictures Israel's sublime commission to the world (chs 40-55). At the same time the prophecies concerning the foreign nations were produced (13:1 - 14:23, 21:1-10).

(5) An intense literary activity, which took place following the Exile, led to a renewed in-

terest in the early prophecies. It was at this time that the collection corresponding to chapters two through twelve, thirteen through twenty-three, and twenty-eight through thirty-three assumed its permanent form.

(6) During the fifth century several teachers sought to meet the problems of their times with the spirit of their master, Deutero-Isaiah. This led to another collection (chs 56-66), which was later combined with chapters forty through fifty-five to form a single book.

(7) Soon after this the prophecy concerning the destinies of Edom and Israel (chs 34 - 35) made its appearance.

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Chronology of the Book. For our purpose the chronology of the book of Isaiah has perhaps been best outlined by Dr. George B. Gray in the International Critical Commentary (ICC), and I have adopted it for use in this study.[1] Many of the prophecies cannot be dated and are not mentioned. Even the dates which are listed may not be one hundred per cent accurate, but it is the best which can be done according to our present knowledge. Following is Gray's outline:

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<u>The Book of Isaiah in the New Testament and its Values for Us.</u> More quotations are found in the New Testament from the book of Isaiah than from any other writing of the Old Testament.[2]

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6:9-10 --- Matt 8:14-15.

7:14 --- Matt 1:22-23.

9:12 --- Matt 4:15-16.

29:13 --- Mark 7:6-7.

40:3-5 --- Mark 1:2-3, Matt 3:3, Luke 3:4-6.

42:1-4 --- Matt 12:18-21.

49:6 --- Acts 13:47.

53:1 --- John 12:38.

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The earliest efforts of the Christians for the conversion of their neighbors, particularly the Jews, drew their potency largely from this book. Isaiah himself, although not considered to be as great a prophet as Jeremiah, far surpassed the latter as a wizard of words.[1] In the words of Dr. Gordon: "The book of Isaiah is the crowning glory of prophecy. As literature it stands supreme, being distinguished alike for majesty of thought, brilliance of imagination, and elevation of style and diction. Its religious quality is as conspicuous. In no other prophetic book have we so many rays of heavenly light; in no other are we pointed so clearly forward to the perfect day. And the light that streams from the Book still shines undimmed over the ages. In its light we find light abundant to guide us through the many tangled problems of our own day."[2]

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## II.

## Isaiah, the Man

In this chapter we shall attempt to deal with the man whose name has been given to the collection of prophecies which we have just discussed. We shall first delve briefly into the historical background of the time in which he lived, following it with a sketch of his environment, his home relationships, and his later ministry. Through all this his faith in Yahweh, and his strength of character shine forth as brightly as the sun above, and therein lies the secret of the peculiar charm which Isaiah has had for posterity.

Historical Background. During the later years of the ministries of Amos and Hosea, the youthful Isaiah was growing into manhood. Amos preached in the northern kingdom of Israel about 760 B.C. Most of his work was done during the reign of

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Jeroboam II, who is generally considered as the greatest king produced by Israel during her career as a separate state. Hosea also worked in the northern kingdom, probably between 746 and 734 B.C.

A little before this a new menace had begun to appear on the horizon and was gradually becoming stronger and stronger. This menace was the nation of Assyria. They began with a small state but it was not long until they had made themselves felt among the neighboring peoples. Their first great king was Tiglath-Pileser I, who reigned about 1120 B.C.[1] He made raids to the west and is even said to have reached the Meditteranean Sea. "After this reign there is another long period of silence in Assyrian history, of which we have no native monumental witnesses; a period of immense importance in the history of mankind for it was a time not only of silence but of actual decay in the Assyrian commonwealth."[2]

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Ruling almost at the same time as Jeroboam II, Judah also had an exceptionally strong king in the person of Uzziah, or Azariah (780-740 B.C.). He defeated the Philistines, increased the army, fortified the cities, beautified Jerusalem, and increased the agricultural resources of the land. A rich caravan trade was established with southern Arabia. The wealth thus secured put her on an equal basis with Israel, and made her a greatly to be desired object of conquest on the part of the greedy Assyrian. But, here too, prosperity resulted in the spread of social and religious evils. Luxury and debauchery were widespread among the upper classes (3:16, 5:11, 28:1-8). The small land owner was driven out and his place

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taken by great plantations owned by capitalists (Isa 5:8, Micah 2:2, 9), resulting in a destitute lower class. Thus at the death of Uzziah in 740 B.C. there was great need for some strong leader who would cry out in vigorous protest against such practices. The answer to this need came in the person of Isaiah, the son of Amoz. In the year that king Uzziah died ...." (6:1).

Jotham succeeded Uzziah, soon to be followed by another weak king, Ahaz. The intentions of Assyria were all too evident. In order to combat the invader Israel and Syria formed an alliance. Judah was hesitant in joining any such dubious league so the other two decided to force her alliance. Ahaz was so terrified at the receipt of this news that almost immediately he rushed tribute to the Assyrian monarch. Assyria responded as was expected and the Syro-Ephraimitic War was at an end. Henceforth Judah was burdened with a heavy annual tribute to the Assyrian overlord. Nor was this enough, for Ahaz made a visit to the great king and came back with the Assyrian gods (II Kings 16:10-16).

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In 727 B.C. the Assyrian monarch met his death and was succeeded by Shalmaneser V. Hezekiah was now king in Judah, and Hoshea had ascended to the throne of Israel as an Assyrian vassal. The latter foolishly formed an alliance with one of the petty Egyptian rulers, and refused the tribute due Shalmaneser. Shortly after the Assyrian troops began a siege of Samaria which was to last three years. Just as the city surrendered Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by Sargon, one of the greatest of the Assyrian kings.[1] Judah had very wisely followed a neutral policy and was now allowed a short period of comparative quiet.

From now on Judah was to assume a new importance. Hezekiah followed the policy of his father in paying tribute to the Assyrians just as long as was possible. But the people grew restless and discontented under such heavy burdens, and once again turned toward Egypt for help. Isaiah was extremely vigorous in preaching against this. He knew only too well the foolishness of

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About ten years later, strengthened by the friendship of the other nations, Hezekiah decided he was strong enough to throw off the yoke of his mighty master. His example was soon followed by the other vassal states. But Sennacherib could not allow anything like this to go on, and set out immediately for the revolting states. The minor kings were conquered without much difficulty, but Sennacherib did not stop with them, and advanced straight on toward Jerusalem. Hezekiah had strengthened the fortifications of the city, but it was to no avail against the oncoming Assyrian army. Sennacherib had soon downed all opposition and become the master of the situation. In his report of the campaign he says,

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"And as to Hezekiah, the Judean, who had not submitted to my yoke, 46 of his strongholds, fortified cities, and smaller cities of their environs without number, with the onset of battering rams and the attack of engines, mines, branches, and axes(?) I besieged, I captured. 200, 150 people small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep without number I brought out of their midst and counted as booty. He himself I shut up like a caged bird in Jerusalem his capital city ..... As to Hezekiah himself, the fear of the luster of my lordship overcame him and the Urbi and his favorite soldiers deserted. With thirty talents of gold, 800 talents of silver, precious stones, rouge .... beds of ivory .... all sorts of objects .... a heavy treasure; also his daughters, the women of his palace, male and female musicians he sent after me to Nineveh, my capital city, and sent his messenger to present the gift and to do homage."[1] This account is in accord with that of II Kings 18:13-16.

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"Few men in Israel so thoroughly impressed their individuality upon their time as did Isaiah. The whole period in which he worked was dominated by his spirit. Neither Ahaz nor Hezekiah nor any of the contemporaries could at all equal him mentally. He overtowered all and stood sovereign above them. The whole period can be understood only as the period of Isaiah."[3]

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2. Rogers, Intro. to Isaiah, (Ab. Com.), p. 656.
3. Kittel, Great Men and Movements in Israel, p. 280.

A Biographical Sketch. There is little information concerning Isaiah's early life. He was born about 760 B.C., probably in the city of Jerusalem. He was given the name of Isaiah, which means "Yahweh saves," or"Yahweh is salvation."[1] His father was Amoz (1:1, 2:1), who was, according to tradition, the brother of king Amaziah. This would make the prophet a cousin of Uzziah. Although this cannot be definitely proven we do know that he had social prestige, easy access to the kings, and was able to associate with the most prominent people of the time. Then, too, the divine element found in his name seems to have been limited largely to the royalty.[2]

With regard to his youth we can do little more than hazard a guess. We do know that most of it was lived during the prosperous reign of king Uzziah, and in the city of Jerusalem. There are three things which possibly might have influenced him:[3]

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1. Rogers, Intro. to Isaiah, (Ab. Com.), p. 636.
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(1) The great earthquake which occurred during the reign of Uzziah (Amos 1:1), which would naturally make a great impression on a growing boy.

(2) Still more important would be the influence exerted by such men as Amos and Hosea. Their messages can be distinctly traced in his own preaching.

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His home was probably in Jerusalem, a city for which he always had great affection. He lived among all men, high and low, speaking as freely to kings as to the common people.

We know that he had a family. His wife was called "the prophetess" (8:3). His two sons were named Shear-Jashub (7:3), meaning a "remnant shall return" (10:21), and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, or, "spoil speedeth, booty hasteth" (8:3-4).

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more of Isaiah himself. He had done his life work well and might have spent his old age in peace. As long as Hezekiah lived, Isaiah was certainly highly revered. If he lived to see Manasseh's rule it is possible that he experienced ingratitude and even persecution in his old age. Legend assumes this. It even has the renowned old man lifted to heaven, and when later he told what he had seen there, king Manasseh is reputed to have had him sawed alive into pieces.[1] This is affirmed by the Apocryphal book, "The Ascension of Isaiah," by Justin Martyr, and may be back of Hebrews chapter eleven, verse thirty-seven.[2]

The Ministry of Isaiah. The ministry of Isaiah is best known for its religious statesmanship. He was able to combine these two in a remarkable way. Three outstanding crises of a political nature challenged attention during his time of active service. The first occurred with a few years of

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his call. Israel allied herself with Syria and the two of them decided to invade Judah in order to force her to join with them in their defense against the common enemy Assyria. Ahaz, a weak effeminate king, was on the throne of Judah. He was so thoroughly terrified at this threat that he turned to Assyria for aid and placed himself under her protection. Isaiah was vigorous in his protests against such a policy. He predicted the speedy downfall of the two northern kingdoms advising Judah that help could be gained only from Jehovah, and not from any external source. He even met the king at the upper pool, preparing for siege, and challenged his action. But he failed to influence Ahaz. At the price of national independence Ahaz had purchased the help of Assyria gaining nothing more than a temporary period of peace. Isaiah's attempts to save his country had failed but the crisis had afforded him a magnificent opportunity for declaring the truths of unchanging worth and constant relevance.[1] He declared that the deciding factor in any situation

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is not the material consideration, but the holiness of God. "Jehovah of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread" (8:13).

The second crisis was the direct result of the first. Hezekiah had now succeeded his father on the throne of Judah. Early in his reign a party arose favoring repudiation of the protectorate of Assyria and alliance with Egypt. In spite of the fact that Isaiah had so vigorously opposed the appeal to Assyria, he had accepted it, knowing only too well the futility of further resistance. The proposed alliance with Egypt would be nothing short of suicide. Nothing could possibly be hoped for from her: she herself was a broken reed (36:6) which would quickly succumb to the superiority of Assyria. To emphasize his message Isaiah walked for three years in the streets of Jerusalem dressed in the garb of a captive. It was not only political shortsightedness which he condemned but also their lack of faith. Once again the leaders had left God out of all their considerations.

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"They look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord! Yet he also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back his words: but will arise against the house of the evil doers, and against the help of them that work iniquity" (31:1-2). For Isaiah there could be no separation between the things of common life and religion. God's will was supreme in every sphere.[1] This time he was more successful in his efforts. The excitement was quieted, and, at least for the time being, the proposed alliance with Egypt was forgotten.

But still the danger was not averted. Sennacherib had succeeded to the throne of Assyria. This seemed to form a favorable opportunity for revolt on the part of the vassal states, and Hezekiah took an active part in the conspiracy. Again Isaiah vigorously opposed the national policies. He declared Assyria the divine instrument of Jehovah appointed to punish the chosen people for their transgressions. Therefore, for Judah to rebel against Assyria was to rebel against

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Jehovah. However, in due time, the instrument of punishment itself would come to an end and meet a well deserved fate at the hands of Yahweh. The attack which followed was a severe and fearful justification of the words of the prophets, and Jerusalem was saved only by the surrender of Hezekiah and the payment of an extremely heavy indemnity. But for some reason Sennacherib decided that he had made a mistake, and demanded the immediate surrender of the capital city. In the last measures of distress the king and his counsellors sent for Isaiah. Here he rises to the true height of his greatness. His message this time is full of hope and optimism. "Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me ..... Thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come unto this city, nor shoot an arrow there, neither shall he come before it with shield, nor cast a mount against it .... For I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake"

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As we have seen in our discussion of the historical background a sudden pestilence nearly destroyed Sennacherib's army and forced him to return to Nineveh.[1] "The city was saved; the prophet vindicated; and Jehovah was revealed as a God of grace, who, though he punishes sin, delights in mercy and forgiveness."[2]

Judged by its practical value, the place of the ministry of Isaiah in the company of the prophets is unique.[3] Israel had succumbed to the Assyrian. The burden of the entire heritage as God's chosen people had fallen on the little kingdom of Judah, and it, too, seemed on the verge of disaster. There appeared to be nothing which could save her from a like fate, and when she perished all hope for the triumph of a truly spiritual religion must also perish. But it was given that she should exist for another century until her religion had taken such firm root that no mere political disturbance could endanger its

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existence. It was chiefly through Isaiah that this additional lease on life was gained, and Jehovah's glories perpetuated for all mankind. Isaiah's most outstanding work was probably done as a religious statesman. His ministry was concerned with the political as was that of no other prophet. But it was concerned with the political only for the sake of the religious. In Judaism the political and the religious are bound together in such a way as to be almost inseparable. Thus, in the kingdoms of Israel and Judah it was true that as the government was concerned, so was the religious life of the people concerned. Isaiah knew this and it was because he was concerned with the perpetuation of the worship of Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, that he played such an active pole in the political drama of his day.

A Brief Character Sketch. It is always difficult to sum up the character of any great man such as Isaiah, and especially is this true when we know as little about the personal life of our subject

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<u>A Brief Character Sketch</u>. It is always difficult to sum up the character of any great man, such as Isaiah, and especially is this true when we know as little about the personal life of our subject

as we do about this prophet. However, in studying his message and his religious experience certain definite characteristics stand out, and from these we shall attempt to gain some conception of the personal character of Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

We have seen that he was probably born of a royal family, yet his spirit of democracy is one of his outstanding characteristics. He mingled with all classes of men, of all races, and of all occupations. He spoke as freely to kings as to common people, and to common people as to kings. He condemned the vices of the ministry as strongly as those of the royalty (28:7). We can truthfully say of Isaiah, as St. Paul said of himself, that he was all things to all men in order that by all means he might convince some (I Cor. 9:22).

The second characteristic I would name is that of his courage. It most certainly took a great amount of courage to go on with his chosen profession when the Lord told him that he would not be received, that his message would fall on deaf ears, and that the hearts of the people would

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not understand (6:9ff). It takes a brave man to go ahead in the face of such a congregation, but it did not take Isaiah long to decide which course he would follow. Nor was this opposition a mere dream for it was present in full force during his entire ministry. Time and again he advised against the policies of the government (3:12, 5:13, 7:8ff, 10:5-12), but it was all to no avail. He warned the people repeatedly of their iniquities, predicting certain doom unless they changed their ways (1:18, 10:1-4, 9:8ff, 5:18-23). Only a man of the utmost courage could have preached such a message, in such a time, and to such a people.

However, in the face of all this opposition he never lost his steady outlook on the future. His far sightedness, or as we would say today, his abundance of "common sense," was ever present. He knew when to speak and when to be silent (8:16ff). He knew when to condemn and when to encourage. He knew when to despise and when to love. He was strong in his opposition to the Assyrian alliance, but when it was made he knew the only sensible

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thing to do was to support it. When Jerusalem was threatened with siege by the forces of Sennacherib he saw that Hezekiah was really sincere in his prayers to Jehovah, so he gave the king a new hope (ch 37). He seemed to be endowed with a sixth sense always divining which policy was the wisest.

Added to this valuable quality of common sense was a deeply emotional nature. Any man who experiences such a call and commission as is recorded in chapter six must be deeply emotional. Nor can I imagine Isaiah in his conversation with king Ahaz at the upper pool, condemning the sins of the priesthood, or crying out against the transgressions of the rulers, without bringing into full play the powers of his emotional nature. Such messages as he delivered time and again must have been packed full of fiery indignation, of righteous wrath, and yet of a tender sympathy which only a man of Isaiah's abiding religious experience can have.

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Another outstanding characteristic of this prophet, and to me the greatest of them all, was

his faith in a righteous Yahweh. He believed implicitly that Yahweh was righteous; that He would do what was right under all circumstances; that he was the God of Israel and everything He did was for their ultimate good. Such a faith could be grounded only in a deep~~t~~ religious experience, but this we will discuss later. Jehovah must have been sorely tried by the iniquities of his chosen people but Isaiah knew that He still loved them and wanted to help them. There was no uncertainty about it in the prophet's mind. He knew that Yahweh was a righteous God. His faith was absolute.

Isaiah was essentially optimistic. He is often referred to as the prophet of hope. Not only was his message full of hope but he was of such a nature as to be eminently fitted to carry it. In the account of his call after Yahweh had told him what the nature of his message was to be he exclaimed, "O Lord, how long?" (6:8ff), as if he shrank from prophesying evil.[1] His doctrine of "the Remnant" (7:3, 11:11), and his belief in "the Messianic King" (9:6, 11:1-5, 32:1) are

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further indications of his optimistic nature.

Then we have every reason to believe that Isaiah lived what he preached. Such a characteristic seems to be rather lacking today but it was dominant in Isaiah. No one could ever accuse him of being mixed up in the revels of the drunken priests, or of courting the favor of kings. He was thoroughly imbued with his message and it showed itself in every aspect of his own life. He was so concerned over the proposed Egyptian alliance that he even walked about the streets of Jerusalem for three years in the garb of a captive, that is,"naked and barefoot" (20:2ff).

We know that such a man had high ideals and these dominated his entire life. We are sure that he must have been a man of much prayer. He was probably a powerful speaker, a forceful personality, and a man of God in every sense of the word. Thus we could go on ascribing quality after quality to this prophet, but suffice it to say that he was a man of great ability, of sterling qualities, and of the highest character, giving his all in the service of a righteous Jehovah

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III.

## The Call of Isaiah

The entire religious life of the prophet Isaiah centers around the experience of his call and commission. This is the first real glimpse we have of the prophet, although we can infer some things from his later writings. All of the various influences of his young life, up to this point (740 B.C.), seem to express themselves through this experience, and most of his prophecies can be traced back to it. Practically all the experiences and teachings of his after life seem to have developed from it.

The description of Ezekiel's call and commission is far more elaborate, but it is no more self revealing or effectively told. In fact the elaborate symbolism of Ezekiel would tend to antagonize some students. Chapter six is truly one of the finest autobiographical passages, from

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the religious point of view, to be found anywhere.

Factors Leading to the Experience. Very little is known concerning the life of Isaiah preceding his call and commission so any discussion of the factors leading to it must be more or less problematical. First of all, most scholars agree that he was of royal birth. This would mean that the young Isaiah would be given the best education which the age afforded. He would have early advantages which would be closed to the average boy.

He must have had a religious background of considerable influence. Few are the men who will enter upon any such experience as this and immediately recognize its significance without considerable religious training. The first thought which entered his mind was that of his own unworthiness and this would be found only in a deeply religious character. Furthermore, he understood the significance of seeing the Lord Jehovah with his own eyes and this demonstrates his knowledge of the religious beliefs of the

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time. He was probably well acquainted with the "E" Document (750 B.C.), and also with the "J" Document which existed at this time only in its oral form. It seems to me that the entire experience of his call and commission would have been impossible to Isaiah had he not been thoroughly trained and educated in the religion of his fathers.

Secondly, it is possible that he might have been influenced by the preaching of Amos and Hosea. Especially would this be true of Amos, as he was a native of Judah. Amos also was active a few years before Hosea, thus giving his message more time to reach the ears of the youthful Isaiah.

Thirdly, the illness and death of king Uzziah would make a profound impression on a growing, thinking youth of the royal household. Judah had been extremely prosperous under Uzziah and the royal court was undoubtedly a very happy place. Then, suddenly, king Uzziah was stricken with leprosy (II Kings 15:5). Isaiah had probably looked upon the good king as a sort of ideal and

time. He was probably well acquainted with the "E" Document (750 B.C.), and also with the "J" Document which existed at this time only in its oral form. It seems to me that the entire experience of his call and commission would have been impossible to Isaiah had he not been thoroughly trained and educated in the religion of his fathers.

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Thirdly, the illness and death of King Uzziah would make a profound impression on a growing, thinking youth of the royal household. Judah had been extremely prosperous under Uzziah and the royal court was undoubtedly a very happy place. Then, suddenly, King Uzziah was stricken with leprosy (II Kings 15:5). Isaiah had probably looked upon the good king as a sort of ideal and

it would be a great shock to see him suffer. It would hardly help making him think about the more serious things of life and concerning the supposedly righteous Yahweh, god of Israel. We do not know positively whether or not Uzziah actually died before the call and commission came to Isaiah, but the severe illness of the king would have been enough to stir him to profound thought and meditation.

The External Experience. In this disturbed state of mind Isaiah entered the Temple to worship, probably in the company of many others.[1] Dr. Davidson pictures him as entering there immediately after the funeral rites of the dead king in order to render homage to "the king invisible."[2] While there he experienced a vision which changed his entire life. Entranced by the ceremonies taking place around him he saw Jehovah, the God of Israel. The vision was real and genuine, not mere fancy, or a figment of the imagination. "As he sat there Isaiah suddenly

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had a strange feeling. His soul was possessed of the thought of the vital nearness of his God. In place of the earthly temple with the earthly sanctuary of Yahweh, he saw the heavenly sanctuary and Yahweh himself as the great God of the universe, sitting on his throne arrayed in the royal purple which filled with color the whole of the heavenly throne room. The earthly priests were changed to angelic heavenly forms who hovered about the Lord of the world and tended the heavenly altar fires. The fire of the earthly altar became that of the heavenly altar at which the seraphim offered sacrifice, and choruses of angels praised the Holy One."[1]

"Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (6:3). They did not pray as we do, that his name may be hallowed. Already for them, the divine name is hallowed, and the earth is full of his glory.[2] From this Isaiah received the chief message of his future ministry. For him Jehovah was now

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2. Mundson, Seven Lights of Prophecy, p. 138.

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Now came his commission: "Go and tell the people. Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not" (6:9). This

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However, in spite of the fact that he had been warned of the refusal of the people to accept him, Isaiah was not left without hope. There came to him the promise of "the Remnant" (6:13). This, too, occupies a prominent place in his preaching. To be sure the last phrase of verse thirteen does not appear in the Septuagint and hence has been the subject of much controversy among Old Testament students. But even if it is a later addition we do have the doctrine given plainly enough in the naming of his first son, Shear-Jashub, meaning "Remnant shall turn." His name is a promise. "No matter how much Isaiah's own generation may refuse to forsake its sins and

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The Internal Experience. The first step in the experience of the internal vision, as we have chosen to call it, is the revelation of the Lord, majestic, holy, righteous, surrounded by a world of life and activity. He awakes to the fact that there is a great Ruler behind all things, watching over Israel, and always doing what is right. Isaiah was at last able to peer through the dark glass of everyday life and come near to Yahweh.

This brings us to the second step - the realization of his own unworthiness.[2] "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (6:5). The sight of God is always the signal for a reaction in our own minds and souls, but it reacts on few of us with the power that it did on this prophet. The first thought which entered his mind was that of fear. He

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did not mean that only his lips were unclean; they merely symbolized his entire self. There was an ancient Jewish tradition that he who saw Jehovah, and who was unworthy, must surely die. Isaiah felt his uncleanness exposed before the throne of Yahweh and he was fearful.

The feeling of fear was succeeded by another. As his sins were taken away the thoughtof his own relationship to God came to him.[1] One of the seraphim took a live coal from off the altar and carrying it with a pair of tongs, touched it to Isaiah's lips saying, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin forgiven" (6:7). He realized, perhaps for the first time, that forgiveness and redemption come from God.

The third step is the revelation of his mission to Israel. "The great characteristic of the age was religious indifference .... Men could not be impressed with the idea of a living God, a Sovereign high and lifted up, ruling over the world and life and men's consciences .... They were

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Finally comes the inner revelation of the prophetic message. It was to be in two parts - first there is destruction and then redemption.[2] Ruin must come first and then through it would come salvation. "Woe to the crown of pride of the drunkards of Ephraim ..... and in that day will Jehovah of hosts become a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty unto the residue of his people; and a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and strength to them that turn back the battle at the gate" (28:1-6).

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oppression and perverseness, and rely thereon; therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly in an instant ..... And therefore will Jehovah wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you; for Jehovah is a God of justice; blessed are all they that wait for him" (30:12-18).

It is significant that in a moment the realization of the direction of his entire life appeared before him. Yahweh will punish but a remnant shall survive. This is one of the outstanding themes of his ministry. No matter what else happens this remnant of the chosen people will survive. On them a new race will be founded. "In a moment his whole life's activity stood up in this vision before him - his place among men, his work, his mission, his message, his conception of what God was doing and should do."[1]

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Following is the summary which Dr. Peritz gives us of Isaiah's call, interpreting it as a literary form expressing psychological experiences, which give the causes, motives, purpose, and success of his prophetic mission:[1]

(1) The realization of the evil conditions of his time, clearly visible to observation.

(2) The recognition of the moral demands of Jehovah, expressed in the term peculiar to Isaiah, the holiness of Yahweh.

(3) A consciousness that he should be an instrument of God to stem the tide of evil and bring about better conditions.

(4) A realization of the difficulty, and, as experience taught, of the practical impossibility of the task of bringing about a permanent reformation until the nation had learned its lesson by exile.

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IV.

## The Growth of Isaiah's Religious Experience

Any vital religious experience, such as that of Isaiah, cannot be expressed in a single vision, nor can it allow the revelation gained in the vision to remain static. It must grow and develop.

This can be done in several ways. It can come about through additional visions, through added experience, or through some new interest, or it can be a combination of them all. The picture given us in chapter six is a remarkable starting place, but we cannot allow it to rest here. It is impossible to think of the religious experience of a man like Isaiah in any way except as a gradual development throughout his entire life.

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Other Isaiahic Visions. It would be hard to conceive of a man experiencing the vision recorded

in chapter six, and then not having any more. The very nature of the prophet Isaiah would seem to indicate that he was continually seeing Yahweh. Isaiah, or his editors, lists several of these instances. They are not of the same magnitude as that of his call and commission, nor are they as epoch making as that was, but they can be classified as visions.

In chapter one, verse one, the editor specifically mentions a vision. "The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah."

At the beginning of the next chapter we find this title: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." He does not definitely mention a vision but it is implied in the verb saw.

In chapter eight Isaiah mentions the fact that the Lord has spoken unto him three different times. A son is born unto him, and he considers it as a divine sign, as the direct word of God. The son is named Maher-shalal-hash-baz, meaning

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When Judah seemed determined to form an alliance with Egypt Isaiah took desperate measures. He put on the garb of a captive, which was exceedingly scanty, and walked the streets of Jerusalem for three years. The inspiration for this also came about through a message from Yahweh. "Jehovah spake by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saying, Go, and loose the sackcloth from off thy loins, and put the shoe from off thy foot. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot" (20:2).

Chapter twenty-two finds Isaiah's threats toward the Israelites reaching their peak. The people are gay and light hearted. They have no serious thoughts. Sennacherib has raised the siege and the people have gone mad with joy. But he will return again, and they cannot possibly

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hope to defend their city without the help of Yahweh. Then the prophet makes the statement of another vision: "And Jehovah of hosts revealed himself in mine ears" (22:14a).

Chapter thirty-one is a return to the problem of the Egyptian alliance. Here again Isaiah receives the direct word of his Lord. "For thus saith Jehovah unto me ...." (31:4).

Thus we see how great a part the vision of the Lord played in the life of the son of Amoz. These might be referred to the same vision, but that is hardly probable. Some of the problems which he touches on were scarcely discernible in 740 B.C. at the time of his call and commission. They do not all need to be considered as separate visions, but I do believe that there was more than one, and probably many more.

<u>The Development of Isaiah's Religious Experience</u>. Isaiah's religious experience underwent a distinct growth. As he became older and more experienced in the ways of the world his message also changed and developed. This process is clearly illustrated

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in the heading of the second chapter, which is substantially that of the first. "The word that Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem." This strictly national point of view continues through all the first thirteen chapters, and then it suddenly branches out to include the nations around him. He has revelations concerning Babylon, Egypt, Moab, Damascus, Tyre, and Arabia. He now envisions things concerning all the nations and all the capitals which effect Judah. He has grown from a nationalist to an internationalist.[1] He believes that the divine plan includes all nations and all cities.

His social vision is another interesting development. As a boy growing to manhood in the upper circles, Isaiah probably did not realize that there was a social problem. It is likely that it did not occur to him that people were hungry, and in economic distress. But after the Call his eyes seem to have opened quickly. The prosperous reign of king Uzziah had brought about all kinds of laxity in moral and ethical

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The conception of God as "the Holy One of Israel" narrated in his call is magnificent, but this too developed. Yahweh was not only "high and lifted up"but he was also a God of character, of purity, of righteousness. Later he adds to this and declares that Yahweh cannot be worshipped through ceremony and that alone. He demands something far deeper. "And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them; therefore ..... the

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wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall he hid" (29:13-16).

He emphasizes the need for faith in this "Holy One" early in his preaching. "If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established" (7:9b).

"And I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him" (8:17).

Later in his ministry Isaiah introduces a new emphasis in the promises of a loving God in return for a steadfast faith. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not be in haste" (28:16).

"For thus saith the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (30:15).

The very idea of the remnant is a growth. Isaiah starts in all his thinking with a "Holy

wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid" (29:13-16).

He emphasizes the need for faith in this "Holy One" early in his preaching. "If ye will not believe surely ye shall not be established" (7:9b).

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The very idea of the remnant is a growth. Isaiah starts in all his thinking with a "Holy

Jehovah." God is infinitely righteous, and everlastingly pure. Therefore he cannot allow unholiness and unrighteousness to abide among his people. He will surely destroy them. This brings Isaiah face to face with a startling question. What then will become of Judah, of Jerusalem, of his people. They are not pure, they are not righteous. Yahweh will surely not blot out all his chosen people. He finds the solution in the doctrine of "the Remnant." A few will return to Jehovah. A minority will repent of their sins and these will survive. God cannot be defeated through the sinfulness of men. The future of the world will always belong to the remnant.[1]

The Messianic conception appears in three places: the first seven verses of chapter nine, the first five of chapter eleven, and chapter thirty-two, verse one following. In chapter nine Isaiah tells us that someday the people are going to see a great light, that their enemies will be defeated, and that a new king will rule in Israel, "and his name shall be called Wonderful

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Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6). These imply sagacity, might, strength, protection, and gentleness.[1]

In chapter eleven we have a somewhat different picture. For the first time we learn that he is to be of the stock of Jesse. The traits of spirit and might are still ascribed to him but there is another which goes still deeper. He is to be a religious man, fearing the Lord Jehovah. He will be an ideal judge. He will be solicitous for the rights of the poor and of the weak. He will see that righteousness will come for all.[2] This certainly marks a change and a growth over the Messianic portrait presented in chapter nine.

The third mention of the new king is rather disappointing. Only one sentence directly concerns the Messiah. "Behold a king shall rule in righteousness" (32:1a). Then the prophet proceeds to give us a beautiful picture of humanity at its best. It is the finest in the human personality which is to receive the divine blessing. However,

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2. Ibid., p. 155.

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1. Jefferson, Gradual Ideas of Isaiah, p. 144.
2. Ibid., p. 155.

there is an observable note of tenderness creeping into the prophetic message.[1] The human race has been exposed to suffering, but He will provide food and shelter.

This quality of tenderness is indicative of the entire range of Isaiah's development from the time of his call and commission (740 B.C.) until the time of Sennacherib's invasion (701 B.C.). At first he was harsh and unrelenting but as he grows older he gives more and more hope to the Israelites. He becomes kinder in his attitude toward them. Yahweh becomes a God of mercy, as well as of doom.

Isaiah as a Mystic. The study of mysticism usually is concentrated in the period of Christendom, but there are certain mystical elements in the prophet Isaiah which are worthy of discussion.

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1. Jefferson, Cardinal Ideas of Isaiah, p. 126.

of the highest order. Here the mysticism of the Old Testament achieves its most sublime expression."[1]

As Professor Brightman views this experience as recorded in chapter six he finds three outstanding elements present which are definitely mystical.[2] First, it took place in the Temple. Here Isaiah was surrounded by all of the sacred imagery and symbolism which he had been taught to know and revere from the earliest childhood. Thus he had a definite consciousness of the Temple and all that it meant as God's dwelling place.

Second, we find that Isaiah was seeking God rather than having God seek for him. He was definitely searching for something higher than that which he already knew.

Third, certain psychological factors were present. It was visual - "I saw the Lord." It was auditory - "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts." It was tactual - "Lo, this hath touched thy lips." These are very significant in their

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position as vehicles for conveying the consciousness of the sacred mysterious presence.

In this connection we should probably consider also such passages as chapter five, verse nine: "In mine ears saith Jehovah of hosts ..." Then there is another in chapter eight, verse eleven: "For Jehovah spake thus to me with a strong hand." These are undoubtedly additional mystical experiences. The psychological factors are especially outstanding. In the first we have the auditory, and in the second it is the tactual. Furthermore in the latter we find the element of force is present. It was impossible for Isaiah to escape even if he desired.

Doctor Strickland has given us three tests for a mystical experience:[1] (1) It must involve not one part of the personality, but the whole person; (2) Its power to leave us with the conviction that we have been face to face with reality;

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(3) Its moral value.[1]

Isaiah's experience of chapter six most certainly involved his whole self. He saw it with his eyes; he heard it with his ears; he was cleansed through his lips; he felt God in his soul; and he answered with his heart. He gave himself completely to his Lord.

It also left him with the conviction that he had been face to face with reality. As one reads the narrative in his book he cannot doubt the reality of the experience in the prophet's own mind. He had seen Yahweh with his own eyes and he knew. There was no doubt about it.

Its moral values are equally as evident. It set the standards for Isaiah's own life, and through his vision of a righteous and moral Jehovah he gained the ethical standards for all of Israel. They must leave their idolatry, the women must abandon their immoral practices, the rulers must leave off their cruel punishments, the lords must cease their economic oppressions, and all Israel must cease her transgressions. This was the moral message of Isaiah's mystical

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experience.

There is only one thing missing from this experience. That is the note of joyousness, and tender intimacy which is so characteristic of the Christian mystics. Here lies the difference between the mysticism of the Old and New Testaments.[1] But we must acknowledge the fact that in the reluctant acceptance of the Jeremiah, and in the glorious vision of Isaiah we have the heritage of the best in Christian mysticism.

But was Isaiah himself a true mystic? That question has two aspects to its answer. Mysticism in its normal form is "That type of religion which is characterized by an immediate consciousness of personal relationship with the Divine."[2] Under this definition Isaiah could certainly be classified as a mystic. As we have pointed out in the above discussion he was in constant communication with the Holy One of Israel. He was deeply aware of the significant fact that his utterances were those of Yahweh speaking through him. Such a mysticism is necessary for everyone

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who would be truly religious.

Under its more radical forms, such as is illustrated by the Buddhistic Nirvana, Isaiah would be excluded. The extreme mysticism is characterized by vagueness, isolation, and inactivity. To the prophet Isaiah this kind of life was impossible. The entire meaning of his experience could be expressed only through the most strenuous activity, and definiteness of purpose. If considered in this light Isaiah was not a mystic. But considered in the light of the more normal experience, Isaiah was possessed of that type of mysticism which is an absolute necessity for us of today if we are to meet the pressing problems of our modern world.

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## V.

## The Problems of Isaiah

In discussing the various problems which confronted Isaiah during his career as a prophet we must realize that they all center around one main theme - the righteousness of Jehovah and faith in Him. So great was the religious experience of this prophet that his entire life was directed by it. Everything he did and said may be interpreted in its light.

His problems are so closely interwoven that any division is practically impossible and must of necessity be more or less arbitrary. However, for our purposes, I have attempted such a division and have placed the several problems under four main heads: personal, social, political, and religious.

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Personal problems. We know so little concerning Isaiah's private life that any discussion of his

personal problems must be to some extent pure supposition. There are, however, a few things which we do know, and through which we can be certain that he must have had his problems. He grew to manhood during the remarkably prosperous reign of king Uzziah. He surely must have been inoculated with the goodness of the king, and with the optimism of the times, just as was everyone else in Judah. But the king was suddenly stricken with leprosy, Assyria under Tiglath Pileser III was threatening Samaria, and he probably had heard of the preaching of Amos and Hosea. These occurrences would cause any thinking young man to ponder in his own mind the meaning of such things, and concerning their cause and solution.

Closely following this comes the problem of his life work. Both problems found their solution in the glorious vision of chapter six. His mind full of strange thoughts, he saw Jehovah with his own eyes, was cleansed of his sins, and was commissioned to preach the Word. In his characteristic manner he quickly subdued all doubts and answered

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with a ringing voice, "Here am I; send me" (6:8b).

As the son of Amoz entered his active ministry I think that he must have found his royal connections somewhat of a handicap in dealing with the common people. Since Ahaz had come to the throne there had been a growing attitude of distrust toward the ruling family, and Isaiah would at least be caught in the shadow of this doubt. It is true that such a background was a great advantage when he desired to deal with the rulers of Judah, but he also had a mission to fulfill toward the lower classes and they surely must have looked askance on anyone related to the royal house who attempted to tell them how to live.

Nor was he able to make much greater headway with the ruling class. They could not be expected to follow advice which would deprive them of any worldly pleasures, nor to sacrifice for the welfare of others. Isaiah was only human and he must have had grave doubts at times as to the worthwhileness of it all. But never once did he falter. Instead, with a clear vision of Jehovah's plan ahead of him he kept straight on toward the

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But the accession of Hezekiah brought him out of retirement and he went on preaching the judgments of Jehovah more vigorously than ever.

Isaiah must have had other personal problems, financial, family, and all the rest, just as men have always had, but we have no record of them. All we can say is that in him they occupied a minimum of space and time, always being completely dominated by his all consuming passion for the service of Jehovah.

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have given us three.[1] The first problem has to do with the wealthy. Lust for money and power had completely destroyed the manhood of Israel. Brotherhood was a thing of the past; love of country had degenerated into a mercenary patriotism. The greatest thing in life was to get and then to keep for one's own use. The best man was he who could steal the most and still not break the law.

"And the people shall be oppressed every one by another, and every one by neighbor" (3:4).

"Woe unto them .... that justify the wicked for a bribe, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him!" (5:23).

Class legislation formed the second problem. This was a direct result of the first. Laws were made which favored the upper classes to the degradation of the lower. This was done chiefly by the change from the old laws of inheritance to those of acquisition by any available means.

"What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jehovah

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of hosts" (3:15).

"For the vineyard of Jehovah of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for justice, but, behold, oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land!" (5:7-8).

The third problem named was that of drunkeness, riotous living, and all the associated activities. Even the priest and the prophet are so drunk that they cannot stand straight while performing the functions of their office.

"Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow strong drink; that tarry late into the night, till wine inflame them!" (5:11).

"Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that deal corruptly! They have forsaken Jehovah, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward" (1:4).

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"Moreover Jehovah said, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and Jehovah will lay bare their secret parts" (3:16ff).

The punishment for all this will be fearful to behold. "Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (5:24).

These problems arose chiefly out of the extraordinary period of prosperity which Israel had enjoyed under Uzziah, and through the introduction of foreign gods under Ahaz. This resulted in a general, all around laxity of moral law. As prosperity had come money had increased, luxuries had become necessities, the need for hard work had decreased, and with it all Yahweh

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Political Problems. The political problems which Isaiah faced in his ministry have been discussed in a previous chapter and need not be repeated at great length here. Briefly, there were three chief political crises which he faced, and shaped his message accordingly:

(1) The refusal of Ahaz to form an alliance with Israel and Syria, and his submission to the overlordship of Assyria. "Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. For the head of Syria is Damascus, and head of Damascus is Rezin; and within three-score and five years shall Ephraim be broken into pieces, so that it shall not be a people: and the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established" (7:7-8).

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people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah - even the king of Assyria" (7:17).

(2) The plot to form an alliance with Egypt which occurred during the early years of the reign of Hezekiah. Isaiah was vigorously opposed to the alliance with Assyria but once it was made he knew it was foolish to revolt. He realized that Egypt was a mere shell and could be of no help.

"Woe to the rebellious children, saith Jehovah, that take counsel, but not of me; and that make a league, but not of my spirt, that they may add sin to sin; that set out to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves the strength of Pharaoh, and to take refuge in the shadow of Egypt!" (30;1-2).

"Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" (31:3a).

(3) The revolt of Hezekiah and the invasion of Sennacherib. The prophet had predicted just such an invasion from the Assyrian for many years, but now he seems to have undergone a change of

people, and upon thy father's house, days that have not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah - even the king of Assyria" (7:17).

(2) The plot to form an alliance with Egypt which occurred during the early years of the reign of Hezekiah. Isaiah was vigorously opposed to the alliance with Assyria but once it was made he knew it was foolish to revolt. He realized that Egypt was a mere shell and could be of no help.

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heart. Hezekiah has turned to Yahweh for aid and Isaiah was ready with his message of hope and success.

"Thus saith Jehovah, Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, wherewith the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, and he shall hear tidings, and shall return unto his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land" (37:6-7).

Isaiah was greatly disturbed because the rulers of Judah refused to take into account the will of Jehovah. Both Isaiah and Micah characterized them as cannibals, mercilessly eating the people whom they should have protected; as haters of good and evil.[1]

"Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth bribes, and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them" (1:23).

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Through it all the prophet's chief concern was the promotion of the religious by means of the political. He realized that if Judah fell the religion of Jehovah would also fall, and he bent every effort toward preventing such an end.

Religious Problems. In our discussion of the social and political problems of Isaiah we have seen that they all center around the religious. It was because Jehovah was so vitally concerned in them that they occupied such a prominent place in the ministry of Isaiah. Never-the-less there are certain problems which can be definitely classified as religious.

First of all we come to the problem of a corrupt clergy. This is one which recurs again and again in the history of the church. Isaiah realized that he could not hope to influence the people toward the way of Jehovah if the priests and prophets refused to follow him themselves.

"And even these reel with wine, and stagger with strong drink; the priest and the prophet reel with strong drink; they err in vision, they

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stumble in judgment" (28:7).

Then there is that problem of formalism in worship; the observance of the externals without the inward sincerity of heart necessary to true worship. Once again we hear the prophetic voice sounding forth clearly, surely, and in no uncertain terms.

"What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of beasts; and I delight not in the blood of the bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to trample my courts? ..... Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (1:11-17).

"Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men

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which hath been taught them ....." (29:13).

The introduction of foreign gods into Judah was another religious problem which Isaiah faced. When Tiglath-Pileser conquered Damascus he remained ~~there~~ for some time, calling his vassals to meet him there. Ahaz, king of Judah, was one of these. As proof of his allegiance, Ahaz declared his country dependent religiously as well as politically upon the will of the Assyrian king. In honor of this pledge he took an altar which he found in Damascus, and brought it home to Jerusalem, placing it in the temple. This was probably an altar to the god Assur.[1] He also introduced the Assyrian worship of the stars and the sun to the people of Judah. Equal to Jehovah and above him many times were placed Assur and Ishtar, the Assyrian gods.[2] But Yahweh was not crowded out of the temple any more than Ahaz himself was crowded off the throne.

Side by side with the introduction of these gods came the social effects which always follow

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in the wake of any let-down of moral standards. It is no wonder that Isaiah so bitterly condemned the policy of the king, and we can easily understand his violent opposition to it.

He met all of these problems in practically the same way. With courage, enthusiasm, and a sureness of God's will he fearlessly spoke his mind. Only through faith in Jehovah could the people ever attain the things for which they were constantly seeking. They must forget the secondary, temporal things which occupied so much of their life. These could be nothing more than temporary, while the only worthwhile life was to be found in following the will of Yahweh. If they refused to do this the consequence would be sure destruction.

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it" (1:19-20).

However, he does not rob them of all hope. To him has come the promise that a remnant shall be left. This is most clearly expressed in the

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naming of his first son, Shear-Jashub (7:3), which means "a remnant shall return" (10:21).

"Whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof" (6:13b).

Then the prophet follows this with an even brighter ray of light - the doctrine of the inviolability of Jerusalem, and the promise of a new Messiah.

"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit" (11:1).

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## VI.

## The Abiding Values, Ideals, and Teachings found in the Religious Experience of Isaiah

The age of Isaiah is striking in its many resemblances to our own time. Of course we have no monster nation ready to bear down upon us and make us a subject people, but we do have many dangers which are just as great, and to which the same principles may be applied. Isaiah preached to a people who had just passed through an extended period of prosperity and were now plunged in depression and such has been our recent experience. Other things had taken the place of Jehovah in the lives of the Israelites even as they have today.

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knew God, and he was deeply conscious of his own mission on earth. His was the task of bringing Israel to Yahweh and nothing else mattered.

The practical values for us found in the life and teachings of Isaiah are many and varied. It would be impossible to cover them all in this study, so I have chosen the ones which to me are outstanding, and shall discuss them briefly.

The Courage of Isaiah. Not many of us would question the courageous qualities of the prophet Isaiah. Time and again he met some pressing problem, or some particularly difficult situation with that same unwavering courage which was so much a part of his nature. His life, especially the earlier years, were full of disappointing defeats, but he never gave up. At the very first, when he received his commission, he was warned of the hostile attitude of the people (6:9-10), but he did not even question Jehovah concerning it. Instead, with a supreme loyalty, he went straight ahead carrying out the will of his God. Nor is it an easy thing to be unpopular.

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It must have taken a great deal of courage to tell the king that he was wrong; to warn the royal courtiers that they must sacrifice their luxuries; to inform the people that they needed a clearer vision in order to attain true happiness. But such courage was that of the prophet Isaiah, and such is the courage which the leaders of the church need today in facing the evil conditions which surround us on all sides.

His Optimism. In spite of the fact that Isaiah did preach certain doom, he never lost his optimistic view of final justice. His was the promise of a remnant; his was the pledge of the inviolability of Jerusalem; and his was the prediction of a new day. He was certain of good things in the end for all who were worthy, and this was the message which he brought to Judah.

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"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people" (11:11)

The prophets of old had long preached the destruction of Jerusalem, but Isaiah saw a need for more than this, and hence his doctrine of inviolability. It was calculated to drive from their minds some of the fear engendered by the threats of sure annihilation.[1] The people were sadly in need of encouragement and hope, and this was what Isaiah attempted to give.

"For Jehovah hath founded Zion, and in her shall the afflicted of his people take refuge" (14:32).

"Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken" (33:20).

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of ancient peoples. Its highest form is seen in Israel's hope of salvation. The idea of a child of God, born of a holy woman in some miraculous way, was not new among the nations. Israel expected a king of the house of David. Isaiah found this hope, accepted it, and gave it its peculiar form as we find it expressed in his prophecies.[1]

There are several of the Messianic passages in the book of Isaiah. The first one which may be so-called is that predicting the birth of a boy who is to be named Immanuel, meaning God is with us (7:10-17). The prophet in his interview with Ahaz at the upper pool tells him to ask a sign of Yahweh as proof of his prophetic message. When Ahaz refuses Isaiah says that Jehovah himself will give a sign, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good the land whose two kings thou abhorrest

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shall be forsaken" (7:14-16).

There has been much controversy over this passage. Some hold to its authenticity as one of the Messianic prophecies, and others believe that it has no such significance. Among the former is Dr. George Adam Smith. He firmly believes that this should be classed as one of the Messianic passages.[1] Professor Rogers maintains that this is the first appearance of the personal Messiah in prophecy.[2]

On the other hand we have the opinion of such a man as Dr. George B. Gray. He frames his conclusions as follows: "Within a few months at most, and perhaps immediately, a child now in the womb will be receiving the name Immanuel, God is with us; for the popular tension will be relieved, and mothers will express the general feeling of relief at the favorable turn in public events when they name their children."[3]

No matter how we may answer this problem there are three other passages which are definitely

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1. Smith, G.A., The Book of Isaiah, p. 131 ff.
2. Rogers, Intro. to Isaiah, (Ab. Com.), p. 644.
3. Gray, Isaiah, (ICC), p. 124.

accepted as referring to the coming of a new Messiah. These are found in chapter nine, verses six through eight; chapter eleven, verses one through ten; and chapter thirty-two, verse one following. The future kingdom of God is also to have its earthly officials, and at the head of them all is to be a ruler of the house of David.[1] He will rule over a kingdom of peace and happiness. All of the cowardly princes, the money mad soldiers, and the idolatrous priests will be banished, and in their place will be a child who shall be called, "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6).

"And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah. And his delight shall be in the fear of Jehovah; and he shall judge not after sight of his eyes,

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neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins" (11:1-5).

"What Isaiah foretold was different from the conception of the men of the exile. Judgment was as deeply embedded in his prophecies as in the utterances of Amos and Micah; but Isaiah stood for something more than bare judgment, and in their own way men recognized it. However much they failed to grasp the full scope of the 'something more,' and especially the significance of the terms on which it was promised they recognised that Isaiah held an ampler sense of the divine purpose than others. He was emphatically the prophet of hope."[1]

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<u>His Passion for Social Justice</u>. Particularly in this day do we need a passion for social justice. Just as in the time of Isaiah, most of the wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, men are starving because they do not have a chance to work, and justice is meted out according to the dictates of the upper classes. We have just passed through a period of extraordinary prosperity and so had Judah. With it all had come carelessness toward the better things of life, and Yahweh had been forgotten. Listen as Isaiah says:

"What mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts" (3:15).

"Rise up, ye women that are at ease, and hear my voice; ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech. For days beyond a year shall ye be troubled, ye careless women; for the vintage shall fall, the ingathering shall not come (32:9-10).

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His Times of Quiet and Meditation. When Ahaz refused to follow his advice and turned to Assyria for aid, Isaiah felt his active ministry to be at an end. He withdrew from every form of public service devoting his time to his few devoted followers, and to quiet meditation.[1] This was a significant move. Isaiah felt that he had failed, so he decided to put his message in the minds and hearts of his pupils in the hope that they might have more success than he.

Then, too, I like to think that he felt a sense of inadequacy on his own part and realized the necessity for an even closer relationship with Yahweh. From Him he hoped to receive renewed vigor and strength for his ministry. As result, when Hezekiah came to the throne, the prophet was once more ready to resume his passionate plea for the recognition of the righteous Yahweh.

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Isaiah not only practiced this in his own life, but recommended it to others in some of the finest of all his utterances. "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and confidence for ever" (32:17).

"In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (30:15).

His Conception of God. Moses gave to Israel a new vision of God, and just as surely did Isaiah raise this vision to a new level of power, love, and righteousness. His new conception of Jehovah

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<u>His Conception of God</u>. Moses gave to Israel a new vision of God, and just as surely did Isaiah raise this vision to a new level of power, love, and righteousness. His new conception of Jehovah

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1. Rogers, <u>Introc. to Isaiah</u>, (Ab. Com.), p. 639.

came to him in the call and commission of chapter six, when the seraphim cried unto him, "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." Of course he had been thinking along this line for many months, but this was the final force which opened the window and let in the light of a new day.

Here Isaiah received the theme which was to dominate all his preaching - the holiness of Yahweh. Every prophet had his own favorite word for God: for Amos it was justice, for Hosea it was kindness, and for Isaiah it was Holiness. But Isaiah did not stop there. Yahweh was "the Holy One of Israel." He always links Judah and Yahweh together. This was the reason why Isaiah took such an active part in politics. He knew that Jehovah was the God of all nations, that he did not belong to Israel alone, but he did think of Him as in living relationship with the people of Judah.[1]

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rich in all goodness, of infinite power, and of infinite capacity for the care of mankind."[1]

The full conviction of the power and greatness of God was so completely present that it dominated his every action, freeing him from all care and fear, and giving him assurance of absolute security. The breadth and depth which this great conception of Yahweh gave to him are such that even today we still gaze upon him with awe and admiration.

His Devotion to an Ideal. Many of us have a high conception of God, or of some particular person or thing, but few of us have the devotion, or the faith, necessary to carry this ideal with us into every aspect of our busy lives. It was this faith, or devotion to his ideal, which set Isaiah apart from the others of his day. It was this which made him a man upon whom the ages still look back and gasp with admiration at his breadth of vision, his indomitable courage, his fearless audacity, and his tender love. It is this which

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we of today need more than anything else. First we need a great ideal, and then we must have a devotion to that ideal which we will carry with us into everything we do, no matter what the cost may be.

It was this faith and devotion which caused Isaiah to become one of Israel's greatest statesmen, which strengthened him in his campaign for social justice, and which led him into the wilderness for the instruction of his followers. This ideal was the all consuming passion of his life. More than anything else, so much so that he was willing to die for it, he wanted to see all of Israel truly a people of Jehovah; to see God control their lives even as He controlled his own.

Isaiah knew that he could not realize this ideal with an eight hour working day, or a five day week. He had to keep at it constantly every hour, of every day, of every week. He won his commanding position not by a single stroke of fortune, but by long sustained and patient efforts. He allied himself with no one but Yahweh, standing aloof from all political combinations. His

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influence was nothing more than that of his commanding character, and of the imperial word of Jehovah preached in season and out of season with unwavering constancy.[1] If we could only gain this same devotion to an ideal, preaching and living the will of God everywhere, constantly, and devotedly, what a change this world would undergo!

Isaiah was the greatest statesman in all the history of the Hebrew nation. He could see farther, think more clearly, and act more quickly than any other political leader the Israelites ever knew. As we look back it is easy for us to see the wisdom of his counsel. If Judah had only followed his advice she would have had no need to turn to Assyria and to Egypt. Instead she would have known the blessings of peace, and the joy of prosperity. As it was, the fact that Judah endured for a full century after the fall of Samaria is due largely to the work of this man of God. His principles of action were those

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of a far-seeing justice, and a profound religious experience. Because of these he could endure persecution, he could face the strongest opposition, and he could still bring a message of faith and hope. Every action, and every word of Isaiah can be explained only through his religious experience. He entered into the political arena because he was most needed there. If he had lived in another day he might have stressed some other particular field of endeavor. Wherever he believed the message of Yahweh was most needed, there would Isaiah be. Only as we gain a glimpse of his almost indescribable religious experience can we expect to see the man. Through it he brought to his day the message which was most needed, and only through a deep religious experience of our own can any of us have the least hope of meeting the problems of our own day and age.

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## Summary

We have not been slow to acknowledge the contributions of Rome and Greece to our civilization, and ~~the~~ we must accord equal recognition to that of Israel. From here we have gained the heart of all that is best in our religion. At the center of this contribution is to be found the life and the message of the prophetic personalities. The prophet occupied a prominent place in the life of Israel. They were the outstanding men of their day and were leaders in both politics and religion. They were each possessed of a great religious experience. It was this which seemed to give them the courage and the wisdom necessary to carry on their work in the face of the most stubborn opposition. One of the greatest of these was Isaiah, the son of Amoz. He was especially active in politics but this was because he felt it necessary in order to further the cause of Yahweh in Judah.

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The book of Isaiah has had a great sphere of influence. Few other books of the Bible can

match its beauty of language or its majesty of of thought. Its authorship has been one of the most difficult problems in all the field of Old Testament research. It is now generally divided into three sections: chapters one through thirty-nine, in the main, belong to Isaiah, the son of Amoz; chapters forty through fifty-five, were written by one who has been called Deutero-Isaiah; and chapters fifty-six through sixty-six are known as Trito-Isaiah. Each of these was written at a different time. The first comes from the life of our Isaiah, the second from the period of the Exile, and the third from the time following the Exile. Each has its values and each can teach us much which is indispensable for our modern age.

We do not know much concerning Isaiah, the son of Amoz. He was born and lived in Jerusalem, probably being a member of the royal household. He had a family and was commissioned in 740 B.C. He is reputed to have been cruelly murdered by king Manasseh but this has little historical basis.

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dealt with three great political crises:

(1) The threatened invasion of Syria and Israel and submission to Assyria.

(2) The proposed Egyptian alliance.

(3) The invasion of Judah by Sennacherib of Assyria.

He met all of these in a masterful way, and if Judah had followed his advice she would have seen much happier days. As it was the fact that Judah was able to maintain its existence for over a century after the fall of Samaria was due largely to this prophet.

His character was of the highest quality. He was democratic, courageous, far-sighted, well balanced, emotional, and firmly believed in a righteous Yahweh. His optimism was never failing and he was possessed of great ideals which he constantly followed.

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Israel which was his dominating theme for the rest of his life. It was here that he heard the call to the ministry and received his commission as a prophet of the Lord. Such an experience cannot come without some preparation and Isaiah had this. He was probably well educated and came from a strong, religious home. Then the illness of the good king Uzziah probably made a strong impression on this youth who had never known anything but happiness and prosperity and caused him to ponder at great length over the more serious things of life. At any rate we do know that he did see the Lord and that because of it his entire life was changed.

But a vital religious experience such as this cannot remain static. It must grow and expand. We would expect a man of Isaiah's nature to have other visions and he does mention a few of them (1:1, 2:1, 8:1, 20:2, 22:14, 31:4). His message also grew. This is best seen by the fact that in the first thirteen chapters Isaiah is concerned only with Judah and Jerusalem, but then he expands and considers his neighbors. His social vision, his conception of God as the "Holy

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One of Israel," his emphasis on the need for faith, his idea of "the Remnant," and his Messianic conception all demonstrate the growth and development of his experience. In general it may be said that as Isaiah grew older be became more kindly in his attitude toward his people. His Yahweh became a God of mercy, as well as of doom.

In connection with this same line of thought we may consider Isaiah as a mystic. He was not one of the extreme mystics such as we find in the doctrines of the Buddha but we cannot escape the fact that his call and commission was a mystical experience. His mysticism was expressed in activity and in the service of his fellow men. In him we find just that kind of mysticism which is necessary to any well rounded religious character.

Another phase of the work and experience of the prophet Isaiah worthy of our thought is that of the problems which he faced. These all center around one main theme - the righteousness of Jehovah and faith in Him. For our purposes they have been divided into the personal, social, political, and religious.

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His personal problems consist in his wonderment concerning the suffering of the good king Uzziah, his life work, his royal connections when working with the common people, and those other ordinary problems which afflict all men. Knowing as little as we do concerning his personal life it is difficult to discuss his personal problems, but we can say that in him they occupied a minimum of space and time being subordinated always to his great task.

The social problems were three in number: that of the wealth, of social discrimination, and of drunkeness and the associated evils. These came about as a natural result of the easy life during the period of extraordinary prosperity under Uzziah. This is the natural result of any period when luxuries become over prevalent and when the need for hard work decreases.

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Last of all we must investigate the secrets of this great prophet which ennabled him to meet such determined opposition, to combat such great difficulties and still to keep his head up and to remain cheerfully optimistic through it all. The first of these is his indomitable courage. Not many men ever face greater difficulties than Isaiah, but not once did he falter. Instead he carried on with a supreme attitude of loyalty and devotion.

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